



**TENNESSEE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
CENTRAL OFFICE
CORNERSTONE SQUARE BUILDING, SUITE 305
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January 23, 2004 Board Meeting Minutes

Commissioner's Present:

Commissioner Garrett
Commissioner Rogers
Chairman Wiggins
Commissioner Rodriguez
Commissioner Hammonds
Commissioner King
Commissioner Todd
Commissioner Horne (via Phone)
Commissioner Hodge (via Phone)
Commissioner Hakeem (via Phone)

Commissioner's Absent:

Commissioner Guess
Commissioner Pride
Commissioner Smith

Staff Present:

Amber D. Gooding, Executive Director
Sherree Hall, Deputy Director
Scott Mayer, General Counsel
Shay Rose, Assistant Counsel
Thierno Bah, Information Systems Officer
Robert Bright, Housing Coordinator
Cynthia Howard, Communications Officer
Lisa Lancaster, Director's Assistant

Guests:

Mr. Rogers
Kelvin Jones

Call to Order

Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Roll call was taken and guests were introduced. Commissioner Rogers offered the invocation.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the November 2003 were reviewed and Commissioner Rogers made a motion to accept which was seconded by Commissioner Hodge. A vote was taken and passed.

Announcements

Executive Director Amber Gooding introduced staff member, Shay Rose, Assistant Counsel. She was welcomed by the board.

Old Business

Cynthia Howard, Communications Officer, was introduced. An outline of the upcoming meetings the Commission plans to participate in was handed out. An overview of the collaboration with the Public Relations firm of Bishop Stein was detailed and updates given concerning the RFP for the coming year. Details were provided for the release of the Quarterly Newsletter that will be distributed via mail, email and the Commissions' Website.

New Business

Housing Coordinator, Robert Bright, from the Knoxville Office gave of report of the Housing cases. Printed reports were distributed. Commissioner Rodriguez questioned if housing complaints could be filed by businesses. General Counsel, Scott Mayer responded that commercial property does fall within the bounds of the complaint process.

Deputy Director, Sherree Hall distributed copies of the Employment case report and outlined the information. Chairman Wiggins requested an update on the expanded report the commission asked for pertaining to more detailed information on cases to include trends, statistical data for the state and nation, etc. Director Gooding reported that data is being collected and formulated for that report and is expected to be available by the March 04 meeting.

Budget Report

Director Gooding outlined budget issues and reported that all areas are on track.

Legal Updates

General Counsel, Scott Mayer, distributed handouts relating to Legislative concerns and bills before the House submitted to the commission for analysis. They included House Bills 1713, 2424, and a memorandum pertaining to subpoena powers. Commissioner Hakeem voiced questions concerning the process of drafting and sponsoring legislation that could be implemented by the commission to improve the effectiveness of the commissions' service to the citizens of the state. Mr. Mayer addressed those issues.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Amber Gooding announced the appointment of Rev. Samuel Kyles by Governor Bredesen to the commission. All aspects of the operational issues within the commission's staff are moving forward and 6 month goals pertaining to staff and finance are being accomplished

The meeting was then closed to staff and guests in order to discuss pending litigation against the Commission. General Counsel, Scott Mayer reminded the commission that a letter of necessity to the Secy. of State's office would be required because of the lack of a physical forum being present. The Commission concurred.

The meeting was re-opened after counsel completed a brief update of the pending legal actions against the Commission.

Updates were given pertaining to the two cause cases filed by Native Americans alleging Religious discrimination.

Commissioner Hammonds reported a Housing Forum to be held at AmSouth in Chattanooga. Director Gooding took the opportunity to encourage all commissioners to get involved in local activities pertaining to Housing and Employment issues.

With no further business to attend to, Chairman Wiggins called for the board meeting to be adjourned. The meeting was closed at 11:52 am.